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Information Needs and Resources Provision for Secondary School Teachers in Imo State, Nigeria: Male Versus Female Teachers

Introduction

Information is the hub of human development around which knowledge revolves. Information is regarded as a vital resource with which an individual functions effectively in the society.

Information needs are at the centre of all areas of life because human wants are insatiable. Information needs, according to Balorinwa (2002), are desires or wants of needs to be transferred for use which prompt man to ask questions about happenings in the past, things to be done, sources and services available, things that will happen if certain things are done according to rules and regulations. Information needs are evidence of a knowledge gap which needs to be fulfilled. The identification of the gap creates room for information search and the satisfaction of the need. The teacher is the mover of learning. He facilitates learning. Like the saying that “one can only take a horse to the stream but cannot force it to drink, the child can be taken to school to learn but cannot be forced to learn except the teacher is well trained, knowledgeable of curriculum content and of child development and can apply appropriate methods and strategies to promote all-round development of the learners to enable them become countable to national development” (Chukwu, 2011).

A major variable as far as information needs and information-seeking is concerned is gender. In the area of information communication services, a gender gap in their use has reduced opportunities for women in the ICT workforce, and teachers are not left out. Researches carried out by Durndell and Thomson (1997), Whitely (1997), and Kadjevich, (2000) noted that females have less computer experience and hold less favourable attitudes towards computers than their male counterparts. Jackson et al. (2001) pointed out that the advent of the Internet for information retrieval and the widespread use of e-mail failed to have an impact on female attitude to computers, despite the fact that there are more female-friendly tasks such as communicating with others via e-mail and accessing information of all kinds. So there is a possibility of difference in the information seeking behaviour of males and females especially with the advent of electronic information resources and sources. Adeoye and Popoola (2011) stressed that teachers need various kinds of information for teaching and research for the purposes of imparting knowledge in students and for self-development. The information needs and information-seeking behavior of male and female secondary school teachers should be a matter of urgent concern, since the extent to which the teachers are informed determines to a large extent the knowledge to be imparted to the students. Moreover, the information needs and ways of seeking information may differ between males and females. This led the researchers to investigate the information needs of secondary school teachers in Imo State, Nigeria, bearing in mind that the picture is very similar in most states of Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

This study was intended to ascertain the information needs and seeking behaviour of teachers in Nigerian secondary schools. The study specifically aimed to

Find out the information needs of male and female secondary school teachers in Imo State.

Find out the information sources utilized by the secondary school teachers in Imo State.

Determine the extent to which the information needs of male and female secondary school teachers are satisfied.

Research questions

What are the information needs of male and female secondary school teachers in Imo State?

What are the information sources utilized by the secondary school teachers in Imo State?

To what extent are the information needs of male and female secondary school teachers in Imo State being met?

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was considered for the study.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference ($P > 0.05$) between the mean satisfaction of information needs of male and female teachers in Imo State.

Literature review

Information needs and information seeking behaviour of teachers

Secondary school teachers need information on how to teach adolescents, who are a very sensitive group of people to handle. Another area where teachers need information is information literacy and skills. Olen (1995) pointed out that teachers should be role models for their pupils/ students with regard to information literacy development and to do this, teachers must become information literate and versatile in their initial teacher education; they need to be competent, confident, reliant and proactive in order to effectively handle issues on information literacy. The most influential model proposed by Eisenberg and Berkovitz (1995) has six skills on the problem solving process which include task definition, information-seeking strategies, location and access, use of information, synthesis, evaporation, etc. should be strictly observed and noted in order to form a stronghold in information literacy and skills.

In this modern time that is filled with different kinds of innovation; teachers need additional information continually to help them in capacity building. UNESCO (2006) noted that capacity building is a key feature of education which needs to be reconstructed and renewed. The carrying

capacity of teachers should be adequately addressed in order to meet their information needs in terms of their content, educational needs, technological needs, information skills, competencies and other challenges. Dike and Umunnakwe (2010) outlined the importance of seminars, workshops and conferences to academic development of the teacher which will be beneficial to the students as well as the teachers.

Teachers equally need information for generally overseeing other activities concerning their personal life and the society at large, including life skills like family life, education, health issues, good nutrition, healthy living, HIV/AIDS, drugs, immunization and interpersonal skills. The teachers themselves need information for their own personal interest on activities going around their environment, be it political, social, religious, health, educational, personal improvement, community services, agriculture, or retirement. The teachers, apart from having their students as their primary concern, cannot neglect their own personal needs and aspirations in the areas that have been mentioned above. These will make teachers to be more fulfilled and as well contribute meaningfully to the development of the society. Health information in the area of nutrition will equally help them to last long. Knowledge on diseases and their causes as well as their curative measures will be of importance to them. This becomes an advantage to the teachers and will help their personal lives.

According to Mansourian (2005) information-seeking behaviour includes a set of activities that people carry out to satisfy their needs. In another study, Aina (2004) asserted that information-seeking behaviour depends on a user's education, access to libraries and the length of time the user wishes to devote to information seeking.

Factors affecting satisfaction of information needs and information-seeking

Generally, Zauwa (1991) pointed out that only few teachers engage in active information-seeking, the reason being either that many teachers do not understand the concept of inquiry for information or lack the knowledge about the existence of information sources.

Accessibility and availability of information sources could equally be information barriers. Afolabi (2004) listed barriers as, high-handedness and selfishness of appropriate channels for disseminating information, ignorance of the existence of appropriate and relevant information, non-conducive working environment which hinders free access and flow of information, and monopoly of information by a few individuals close to the sources. These might be considered to be some of the barriers encountered by information-seekers, including teachers.

Gender restriction to knowledge is a big barrier to be considered. Oyesiku (2000) writing on gender restriction, noted that the female students especially in the Northern Nigerian states, were restricted to the use of libraries. Where women are not freely allowed to access information, vital rights are denied them. This calls for intensive gender mainstreaming into development plan and programme of all sectors including the educational sector and its teachers.

Theoretical Framework

Information models provide a working scheme containing general major concepts and inter-calculation. A number of information behaviour models have been developed over the years but for the purpose of the study Wilson's model was intensively discussed. Wilson proposed a series of information-seeking behaviour models and theories in 1981, 1996, and 1997.

The modification of the 1981 and 1996 models was as a result of further study, backed by empirical evidence which gave rise to the 1997 model.

His 1997 model was based upon two main propositions. Firstly, that since information is a secondary need rather than a primary need, the seeker is likely to meet with barriers of different kinds which can arise as a result of the person himself, his work/social roles as well as environmental factors. The main contribution of Wilson's information need and information-seeking behaviour models are; that information seeking is consequential to situation effect; it does not arise on its own but exists to satisfy or fill perceived need situation. The context of information needs and search could be one of the following: economic, political, technological, social or role-related in other work or task/role related.

Wilson's model recognizes the existence of barriers in the process of information search, which he sees as personal, role-related and environmental. The role of the individual in the success and failure of the information search is consequent upon his physiological, affective and cognitive states. All these are applicable to the situation of teachers, their information needs and the way they seek information to satisfy the need. The shortcomings of Wilson's model however, include inability to explicitly expand what constitutes the information-seeking behaviour for empirical testing. Though he recognized the affective and cognitive nature of the person in information search, yet he failed to clearly identify what this affective and cognitive nature is. The contribution of the model despite its shortfall was most evident in the formation of the questions: what factors influence an information search and what types of barriers do we encounter in the search for information?

The researchers built their study on Wilson's 1997 model because of the advantage of being the latest model proposed after further modifications. It recognizes physiological, social and environmental roles which are fundamental to information needs and the way people go about getting their desired information as well as likely barriers to encounter when utilizing information sources. These as indicated above apply to the teachers and their information seeking to satisfy their information needs.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research. The population of the study comprised all the secondary school-teachers in Imo State about (8600) teachers – 3100 males and 5500 females from the three educational zones; Owerri, Orlu and Okigwe.

From the population of 8600 teachers, the sample size for this study comprised 860 teachers – 310 males and 550 females. The sample size goes in line with what Nwana (1992) stated that, if the population size runs in few thousands that only 10% of the population will be used as sample size. In selecting the sample size, the simple random sampling technique was used to select the teachers. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire whereby the teachers were requested to indicate their responses on a Likert Scale.

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Mean and standard deviation were used in analyzing the data collected. The questionnaire was subjected to pre-test to ascertain its reliability. This was done using Cronbach Alpha test for Internal Consistency. The average reliability coefficient was 0.76 indicating that the instrument was reliable in collecting the desired data for the study. While 860 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the teachers in the different schools. These were sent to them through teachers who served as research assistants. In each case, days were given for the respondents to supply the data and after the collections, 779 copies were correctly filled and returned. The researchers used four point rating scale using upper/lower limits of real numbers to determine how favourable or acceptable each item was using the mean scores. The four rating scale with its corresponding upper and lower limits of real number rating were as follows;

Very high extent (VHE) /Strongly agree (SA) = 3.50 - 4 (mean score)

High extent (HE)/Agree (A) = 2.50 - 3.49

Low extent (LE)/Disagree (D) =1.50 - 2.49

Very low extent (VLE)/Strongly disagree = 1 - 1.49

So in each case, where the mean score falls determines the decision for a particular item.

T- Test was also used to test the hypotheses.

Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant difference between the mean satisfaction of information needs of male and female teachers in Imo state.

Table 1: t- test of significant difference between the mean satisfaction of information needs of male and female teachers in Imo state

S/N	Items	Gender	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal	d/f	Sig (2Tailed)	Remark
1	Information on reading	Male	289	3.04	.82		777	.004	S

	subject and methods of teaching	Female	490	2.86	.89	2.92			
2	Information on school curriculum	Male	289	301	.77	2.53	777	.012	S
		Female	490	2.85	.77				
3	Information on the use of teaching materials	Male	289	2.88	.87				
		Female	490	2.77	.99	1.53	777	.127	NS
4	Information on the use of new technological facilities	Male	289	2.72	.99	2.61	777	.009	S
		Female	490	2.54	.90				
5	Information students character and behaviour modification	Male	289	2.64	.91				
		Female	490	2.56	.87	1.23	777	.218	NS
6	Information on adolescent development stages their attitudes, anxiety and fulfilments, etc.	Male	289	2.57	.88				
		Female	490	2.56	.84	.185	777	.853	NS
7	Information on low to teacher students with special abilities and disabilities.	Male	289	2.53	.99				
		Female	490	2.41	1.00	1.61	777	.107	NS
8	Information on new trends in Education	Male	289	2.43	.91				
		Female	490	2.28	.86	2.30	777	.022	S
9	Information on seminar and workshops for enhancing professional development	Male	289	2.75	.85				
		Female	490	2.57	.86	2.83	777	.005	S
10	Information on managerial skill and competencies	Male	289	2.77	.84		777	.179	NS
		Female	490	2.68	.88	1.35			
	Overall – value	Male	289	2.73	.65				
		Female	490	2.61	.64	2.65	777	.008	S

NB: S= Significant

NS= Not Significant

Table 1 shows t-test result of the mean satisfaction of information needs of male and female teachers in Imo State. The result showed that items 1, 2, 4, 8 and 9 have significant values less than 0.05 set as level of significance, which means that there is a significant difference in the mean response of male and female teachers on those items, while items 3, 5, 6, 7 and 10 have significant values that are greater than 0.05 which means that there is no significant difference in the mean response of male and female teachers on the items. However, the overall t-value of 2.65 had probability value of 0.008. Since the probability value is less than 0.05, it means the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between the mean satisfaction of information needs of male and female teachers in Imo state is rejected and inference drawn that there is a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the mean satisfaction of information needs of male and female teachers in Imo state.

Research question one: What are the information needs of secondary school teachers in Imo State?

Table 2: Mean responses of the teachers on their information needs

S/N	Items	Male N=229			Female N=490			Overall N=779			Decision
		\bar{X}	SD	rank	\bar{X}	SD	rank	\bar{X}	SD	rank	
1	Information on the teaching subjects and methods of teaching	3.42	.72	5 th	3.47	.70	3 rd	3.45	.71	4 th	Mean rating for the female slightly higher than male. In all their overall mean were within the range of high extent.
2	Information on the school curriculum	3.43	.70	3 rd	3.53	.61	1 st	3.48	.66	2 nd	
3	Information on the use of teaching materials	3.43	.71	3 rd	3.48	.64	2 nd	3.45	.68	4 th	
4	Information on the use of new technological facilities	3.49	.66	2 nd	3.42	.73	5 th	3.46	.70	3 rd	
5	Information on students character and behaviour modification	3.04	.77	9 th	3.18	.75	8 th	3.12	.76	9 th	
6	Information on adolescent developmental stages, their attitudes, anxiety, fulfilment etc	3.03	.83	10 th	3.15	.80	10 th	3.09	.82	10 th	
7	Information on how to teach students with special abilities and disabilities	3.22	.78	7 th	3.25	.75	7 th	3.23	.77	7 th	
8	Information on new trends in education	3.36	.68	6 th	3.38	.74	6 th	3.37	.71	6 th	
9	Information on seminars and workshops for enhancing professional development	3.51	.63	1 st	3.47	.67	3 rd	3.49	.65	1 st	
10	Information on managerial skills and competencies	3.16	.76	8 th	3.18	.84	8 th	3.17	.80	8 th	
	Overall total	3.31	.40		3.35	.43		3.33	.41		

Table 2 shows the responses by gender on the information needs of secondary school teachers in Imo State. The mean rating ranges from 3.53- 3.15 for female teachers and 3.51-3.03 for male secondary school teachers and overall for both male and female 3.49 – 3.09. Information on school curriculum that was rated highest by the female teachers with a mean rating of 3.53 was rated 3rd with a mean of 3.43 by the male teachers. Information on seminars, workshops and conferences that enhances professional development came 1st with 3.51 mean rating for male while it was 3rd with the mean rating of 3.45 for female. Apart from the two mean ratings of very high extent, others were rated as high extent, their overall mean indicated 3.35 for female and 3.31 for male; the female indicated higher need for information than the male. However, the overall mean rating for both male and female were 3.33 indicating that their responses were still within high extent.

Supporting the views above on the issue concerning conferences, workshops and seminars, Dike and Umunnakwe (2010) outlined the importance of seminars, workshops and conferences to academic development of the teacher which will be beneficial to the students as well. These teachers, apart from imparting cognitive skills to the students, need information to impart other useful skills on the students which according to the National Policy on Education (2004) includes: respect for the worth and dignity of the individual, moral and spiritual values, promotion of emotional, physical and psychological health of all children, which were unfortunately rated low by the teachers. Supporting this view Olen (1995) pointed out that teachers should be role models for their pupils/students with regard to information literacy. Still emphasizing on that, Olen (1995) opined that teachers need to be competent, confident, reliant and proactive in order to effectively handle issues of abilities and disabilities. All these could be achieved when they are well informed.

Research Question 2: What are the sources of information utilized by the secondary school teachers in Imo State?

Table 3. Mean rating of the teachers on the sources of information utilized.

S/N	Items	Male N=229			Female N=490			Overall N=779			Decision
		\bar{X}	SD	rank	\bar{X}	SD	rank	\bar{X}	SD	rank	
1	Consult the principal	3.08	.73	7 th	3.06	.72	7 th	3.07	.73	7 th	Ratings for information-seeking with high level of acceptance not too
2	Seek the assistance of fellow teachers	3.18	.64	4 th	3.16	.65	4 th	3.17	.65	4 th	
3	Go to the library	3.12	.83	6 th	3.19	.83	3 rd	3.15	.83	5 th	
4	Ask students questions	3.03	.85	8 th	2.98	.83	8 th	3.00	.84	8 th	
5	Listen to television/radio	3.15	.84	5 th	3.13	.74	5 th	3.14	.79	6 th	
6	Browse the internet	2.86	.96	9 th	2.89	.91	9 th	2.87	.94	9 th	

7	Use indexed journals	2.80	.85	10 th	2.78	.85	10 th	2.79	.85	10 th	low not too high.
8	Visit newspaper stand	2.74	.85	11 th	2.71	.84	11 th	2.73	.84	11 th	
9	Consult books	3.35	.77	1 st	3.33	.83	1 st	3.34	.80	1 st	
10	Consult experts on areas of need	3.28	0.93	3 rd	3.10	.97	6 th	3.18	.93	3 rd	
	Overall total	3.08	.45		3.05	.47		3.07	.46		

Male N=229 Female N=490 N=779

The data in table 3 above shows the mean rating of the teachers on the information sources utilized for seeking information and the items were highly rated by the teachers but not to a very high extent. The female mean rating ranges from 3.19 to 2.78 while that of the male ranges from 3.35 – 2.80. The range of male is higher than that of the female teachers. The responses to the various items provided answer to the research question on the various information sources consulted by these teachers.

Zauwa (1991) pointed out that only few teachers engage in active information-seeking, the reason being either that many teachers do not understand the concept of inquiry for information or lack the knowledge about the existence of information sources. Burkett (1992) opined that information seeking should be in co-operated into courses of study in schools and be part of continuing education and on the job training. Other researchers had their views like Sowole (1995) and Bolarinwa (2002) that supported information seeking, involves a commitment of time, effort and money. That goes to confirm the reason for their making effort towards seeking their needed information to meet and satisfy their information needs and needs of their students and the society at large.

Research Question 3: To what extent are teachers' information needs met?

Table 4. Mean responses of the teachers on the extent to which their information needs are satisfied.

S/N	Items	Male N=289			Female N=490			Overall N=779			Decision
		\bar{X}	SD	rank	\bar{X}	SD	rank	\bar{X}	SD	rank	
1	Information on teaching subjects and methods of teaching	3.04	.88	1 st	2.86	.89	1 st	2.97	.88	1 st	Satisfaction of information needs lower 2.73 for male and 2.61 for female and an overall mean
2	Information on school curriculum	3.01	.77	2 nd	2.85	.85	2 nd	2.93	.81	2 nd	
3	Information on the use of teaching materials	2.88	.87	3 rd	2.77	.99	3 rd	2.83	.93	3 rd	
4	Information on the use of new technological facilities	2.72	.99	6 th	2.54	.90	8 th	2.63	.94	6 th	
5	Information on students	2.64	.91	7 th	2.56	.87	6 th	2.60	.89	7 th	

	character and behaviour modification										rating of 2.67 all still with the range high extent
6	Information on adolescent developmental stages, their attitudes, anxiety and fulfillments etc	2.57	.88	8 th	2.56	.84	6 th	2.56	.86	8 th	
7	Information on how to teach students with special abilities and disabilities	2.53	.99	9 th	2.41	1.0	9 th	2.47	.99	9 th	
8	Information on new trends in education	2.43	.91	10 th	2.28	.86	10 th	2.36	.88	10 th	
9	Information on seminars and workshops for enhancing professional development	2.75	.85	5 th	2.57	.86	5 th	2.66	.85	5 th	
10	Information on managerial skills and competencies	2.77	.84	4 th	2.68	.88	4 th	2.73	.86	4 th	
	Overall total	2.73	.65		2.61	.64		2.67	.64		

From the analyses, it is pertinent to note that for both male and female secondary school, teachers' information on teaching subjects and methods of teaching, information on school curriculum, and information on use of teaching materials ranked 1st 2nd and 3rd respectively and also on the overall. This indicates that teachers whether male or female have same level of satisfaction in the areas mentioned. On the lower level, both ranked same as were specified in information on how to teach students with special abilities and disabilities and information on new trends in education. The data on gender showed that the teachers whether male/female indicated the extent of their need satisfaction and with that of male being 2.73 against 2.61 by female. In all, the overall mean value was within the range of high extent with mean score of 2.67. The results here answered the research question above on the extent to which the various information needs of these teachers are being met.

UNESCO (2006) as well as Dike and Ummakwe (2010) noted that capacity building is a key feature of education which needs to be reconstructed and renewed. The carrying capacity of teachers should be adequately addressed in order to meet their information needs in terms of their content, educational needs, technological needs, information skills, competencies and other challenges. Enhancement of educational qualification has been seen as a process that will help the teacher attain the development of his/her potentials and offer him/her more opportunities to excel. The teacher as an agent of national development, civilization and learning according to Achumgu (2000) needs solidified educational qualification to impart desired knowledge expected of him. Ahiauzu (2006) noted that the future of any society depends on the extent to which it accesses and utilizes information as well as her ability to organize, manage and

disseminate information especially in the areas where needs were identified. Often times Ahiazu noted, information might be available but the problem of satisfaction lies on poor access.

Conclusion

Secondary school teachers in Imo State whether male or female have information needs which range from information on new trends in education, information on teaching subjects and methods of teaching, information on school curriculum and others too numerous to mention. There is no much disparity on the nature of information needed by the male teachers and the female teachers, as well as the way they seek information and the extent to which their information needs are being met. For teachers to effectively perform well, their information needs should be fully satisfied. Since the findings of the study implied that there is significant difference in the extent of satisfaction of the male and female teachers' information needs, there is need for the stakeholders in the post-primary school system to provide avenues for the these teachers to access information to meet up their information needs. These could be through information sources such as sound libraries and other related sources. Information is regarded as a vital resource with which an individual functions effectively in the society. The secondary school teachers from any category; male or female identified as an agent professionally trained and qualified to impart knowledge and learning formally in the classroom, need information in order to meet up with the current trend in secondary education, academics generally and other challenges facing them. Meeting the information needs of these teachers is obvious paramount to enhancing their contribution to sound secondary education.

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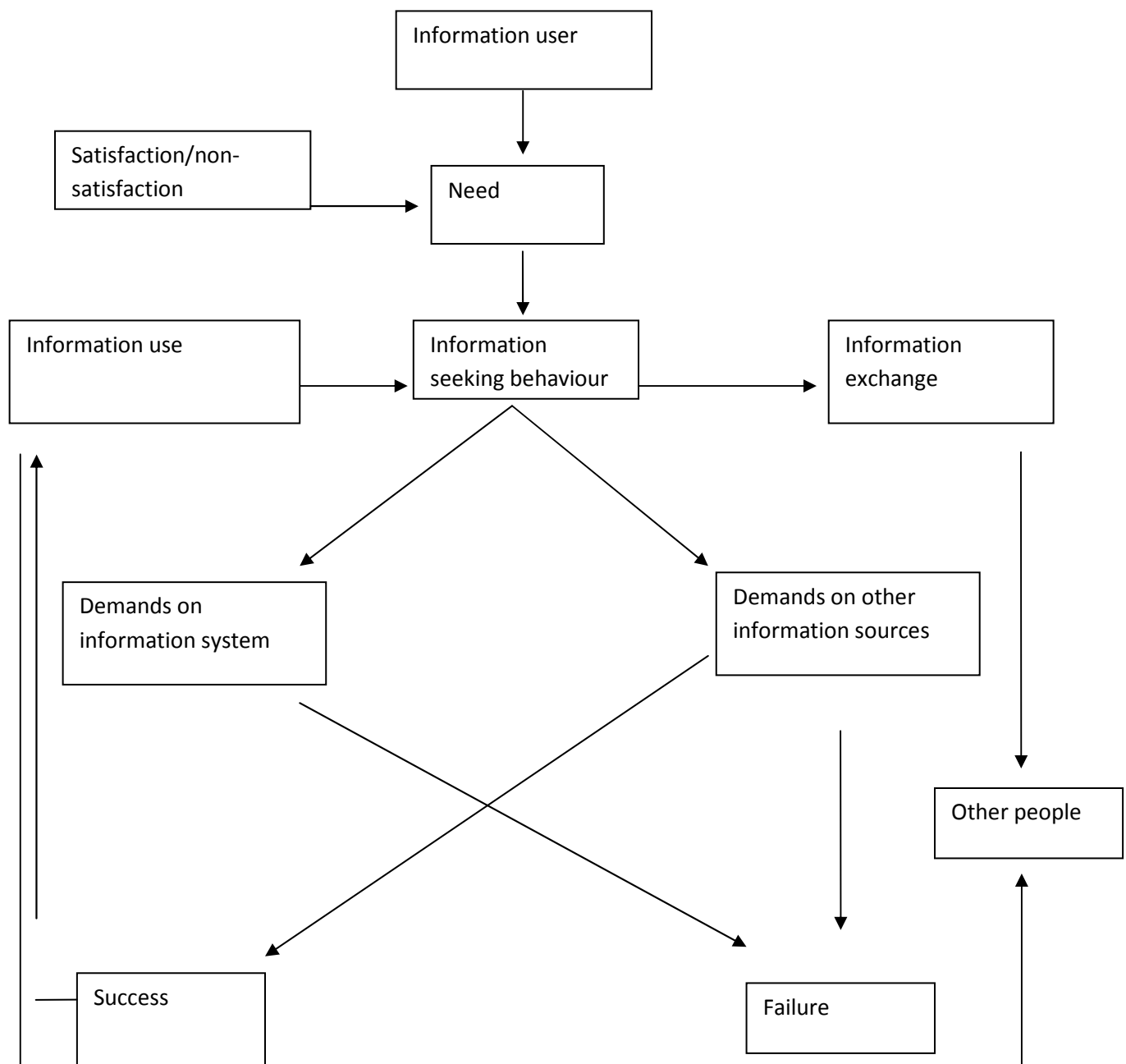
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Figure.1. Wilson (1981) Information model (information needs and information seeking flow chart).



Key to the tables:

S/N – Serial Number of items

X – Mean score

SD – Standard Deviation

N – Number of respondents